

PEOPLE & THINGS

I HEAR that Field-Marshal Lord Montgomery is shortly to move from the Château de Courances, where he has lived and worked for the last six years, to the Hotel Trianon Palace at Versailles.

Courances, with its silver-grey roofs, ornamental water, and magnificent park, is one of the most splendid private houses in France; and I am not surprised that its owner, the Marquis de Ganay, has at last decided to ask for it back on behalf of himself and his five grown-up sons. But Lord Montgomery is naturally sorry to leave Courances, and there are many ordinary people who will miss the sight of his spare and friendly figure on his regular walk through the nearby woods.

A Modest Retinue

HE has made many friends in the neighbourhood and was, in fact, invited to become the squire of Courances village. There has even arisen a local legend about his annual garden party in the park for S.H.A.P.E. officers and their wives. Normally the weather on such occasions would be a matter for anxious concern; but one of his officers said to me: "The Field-Marshal never worries about the weather. He just says 'God will give us fine weather'—and it has always worked. We've even left Paris in pouring rain, got to Courances in sunshine at five o'clock, had two hours' perfect weather and then, when every guest had gone, seen the clouds race back and the rain come down by the bucketful."

The Trianon Palace is one of Europe's most palatial hotels; but Lord Montgomery, true as ever to his plain habits of life, has asked for a small suite, and will take with him only his batman and driver. By living at Versailles he will at least spare himself the long daily drive between Courances and S.H.A.P.E.'s H.Q. at Louveciennes, which he has now done some two thousand times.

Artifice Triumphant

I ALWAYS thought it was impossible to outwit the English climate. But regular visits, during the last few years, to Room XXIX at the National Gallery have convinced me that I was mistaken.

Room XXIX is air-conditioned. That is to say that the prevailing temperature is that of a spring morning in Madeira, and the air is Aegean in its dryness and clarity. The lions in Trafalgar Square may be paw-deep in melting snow; fog may make the George Washington statue invisible at two paces; but neither condition will be acknowledged in Room XXIX, where wilful Nature is put in her place and the weather is unvaryingly serene.

Remembering that the entire Gallery is one day to enjoy these amenities, I asked the Director, Sir Philip Hendy, what news there was of their extension. And I am delighted to report that two more air-conditioned rooms are to be opened later this month.

Pictures and People

REMEMBERING, too, that the building is not the cheapest of operations, I asked the Director if there were particular reasons for installing the new apparatus.

From two points of view, he told me, air-conditioning is indispensable to the National Gallery. Its collection contains a quite abnor-

By ATTICUS

mally high proportion of paintings which are vulnerable to sudden changes in atmosphere; and the climate of London provides those changes in great number and variety. Four of the most famous of the National Gallery's pictures (the Piero della Francesca "Nativity," the Michelangelo "Entombment," the Holbein "Ambassadors," and Rubens's "Château de Steen") have suffered cracked panels as a result of bad weather in the past few years. But where humidity can be controlled, as it is in the air-conditioned rooms, pictures and people benefit in equal measure.

Sea-bears Please Note

WHEN I referred, not long ago, to the ingenious machinery by which Sir Alfred Yarrow was led to drop off to sleep, I provoked a considerable body of correspondence. Many there were who doubted the truth of so strange a device; so that I was delighted to hear from a reader, Mrs. E. K. Vinycomb, who had actually seen the bed when it was out on show.



"It was," she tells me, "a most handsome affair, adorned with a red satin bedspread, and it vibrated quietly throughout the exhibition."

Retired sea-bears, and others who may wish to reproduce on dry land the sensations of ocean travel, will share my interest in the suggestive contrivance which I reproduce above. Entitled the "wave model," it was invented by the late Mr. T. B. Vinycomb, M.C., and claimed to reproduce "all the characteristics of wave motion." Complete with clockwork motor, it was sold at £25, and would appear to have been cheap at the price.

A Good Cause, Inc.

I HEAR great things of Sir Laurence Olivier's film version of Shakespeare's "Richard III"; but I know of at least one group of serious persons which is likely to deplore even the finest presentation of that exciting play: the "Friends of Richard III, Inc."

Though American in origin, the "Friends" hope to spread their activities throughout the English-speaking world. In their efforts to rehabilitate King Richard III, they have a natural ally in the College of Arms; for Richard III both founded and chartered the College, and the "Friends'" secondary object is to raise funds for the repair and restoration of the College building.

The College of Arms is, of course, one of the most elegant buildings in London. The external stone staircase is a model of its kind. Richardson's portrait of Vanbrugh (Clarendon King of Arms 1704-26) sets a tradition of strong and original character which is well maintained by the present members of the College. And the banners which hang above the Earl Marshal's court are none the less stirring for being wrapped in Cellophane. It is a building which would have delighted Horace Walpole (Richard III's first consen-

tious champion) and any society which helps to preserve it has a claim upon our sympathies.

Milk-oh!

LAST week's award, to Sir Arthur Bryant, of the Royal United Service Institution's Chesney Gold Medal was an honour as rare as it is conspicuous. Devised as an occasional award for writers who have treated of naval or military matters with special distinction, the Chesney Gold Medal has been given only once since the war (to Sir Winston Churchill) and its earlier recipients include Sir John Fortescue, Sir Charles Oman, and the great American historian Mahan.

It is not only as a writer that Sir Arthur can claim distinction. The Smedmore herd of Jerseys, which is managed for him by Mr. John Lancaster, has been built up in the last three years from small beginnings. Mr. Lancaster, who comes of a family of north-country farmers, has already made it one of the first Jersey herds in Dorset. One of its cows when it calves this spring should qualify for the English Jersey Cattle Society's O.M., but Mr. Lancaster has hopes of a far greater day when Sir Arthur's score of two gold medals for literature will be beaten by his score for milk output.

A Gilbertian Problem

EVERY lover of "Patience" remembers the name of Paddington Pollaky, who is evoked in Act I by the Colonel of the Heavy Dragoons, coupled with such great names as Nelson and Bismarck, and declared to have made his own contribution to the character of the quintessential Dragoon. No mere rhyme for "Lord Waterford, reckless and rollicky," Paddington Pollaky is credited with a "keen penetration" that has caused Gilbertian scholars to identify him with a private detective who had his headquarters in the 1870s and 80s in Paddington Green.

Such problems rarely make their way into the public prints, so that I was the more intrigued to notice, last Friday, in the most famous of all personal columns, an appeal for further information about "Ignatius Paul Pollaky, born in Pressburg in 1828, died in Brighton in 1918." The advertiser goes so far as to offer a monetary reward: the information, need not, I imagine, be provided in quatrains.

A Little off the Top

BEFORE very long the Royal Opera Arcade is to be pulled down to make way for the new New Zealand House. It is the pickiest, though not the most frequented, of London's arcades; and the shops which line its westward side have a wan and shadowy fascination.

For many years I used to have my hair cut in the Royal Opera Arcade. The charge was small, the equipment rude, the proprietor unexceptionably polite. The work was carried on on two storeys; and on the first floor the chair at the end had its feet in the fireplace and its back to the rest of the room.

One was not always allowed upstairs. Once I ventured up, uninvited; and was suddenly tugged down, though not before I had glimpsed the regular customer who sat at his ease in the farther chair, with a red despatch-box beside him.

"Can't let you up today," said the proprietor. "Mr. Baldwin's having a read again."